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SUBJECT: OSCE WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS: DECEMBER 22, 2009 -
JANUARY 15, 2010

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Carol Fuller for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

Iran As An OSCE Partner for Cooperation?

¶1. (C) Kazakhstani DCM Suleimenov told A/DCM December 22 that Kazakhstan had received preliminary inquiries from Iran regarding the possibility of becoming an OSCE Asian Partner for Cooperation. We note that Suleimenov was previously posted to Iran, speaks the language, maintains ties there, and likely has promoted this ostensible interest. The Kazakhstanis have speculated about other possible new Partners for Cooperation and are, at least at the delegation level, seeking to enhance participation from their region. Suleimenov said he was expecting a formal approach from Iran in January. We underscored that any state seeking association with the OSCE should be willing to abide by its norms and principles and pointed out that any application by Iran would be closely scrutinized by capitals.

Kazakhstanis Back Away from Proposal for ODIHR Office in Georgia

¶2. (C) Kazakhstani Ambassador Abdrakhmanov insisted January 4 that the Kazakhstani proposal to establish an ODIHR office in Tbilisi was floated only on an informal, unofficial basis. As described to several delegations December 22, the office would have operated in a not-further-defined "Georgia," dealt exclusively with human rights and democratization issues, and regularly sought access to the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions. Abdrakhmanov said that while the Chairmanship must thoroughly consider all proposals for an OSCE presence in Georgia, in the future it needed to be more "precise" and attuned to the situation on the ground.

ODIHR Says Croatia's Second-Round Elections Compliant With Standards

¶3. (U) On January 11 ODIHR released its statement of preliminary findings and conclusions on the second round of Croatia's presidential elections, held January 10. The statement said the election generally complied with OSCE commitments and international standards, added that the process confirmed positive developments noted during the first round, and declared that voting was calm and orderly. It also highlighted consolidation and harmonization of the legal framework, continued reform of election administration, and enhanced voter education as issues that deserve continued attention. In particular, it noted that the legal framework for complaints and appeals was not fully compliant, pointing to the failure of the Constitutional Court to render a decision on a complaint from a first-round candidate that the media had not provided equal conditions for all candidates.

Kazakhstan Urged to Facilitate ODIHR/OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Cooperation

¶4. (SBU) CDA Fuller urged Ambassador Abdrakhmanov January 12 to actively facilitate cooperation between the Parliamentary Assembly and ODIHR election monitoring teams ahead of the January 17 elections in Ukraine. She pointed out that Greek Ambassador Marinaki took an active role in 2009 and helped secure a workable arrangement for Albania's elections last June. We provided Abdrakhmanov with a copy of the 1997

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memorandum outlining cooperation between the two OSCE institutions.

Moldova Mission Head Expects No Progress in 2010 on TN Region's Status

¶5. (SBU) Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova Remler told CDA Fuller January 12 that ongoing political instability on both sides of the Nistru River would likely preclude formal negotiations on the status of the Transnistrian region this year. He noted, however, that the sides could make progress building confidence, in part through continued meetings between Moldovan Deputy Prime Minister Osipov and Transnistrian Lead Negotiator Yastrebchak. Remler also mentioned that the Kazakhstani Chairmanship had proposed an informal 5 2 meeting in mid-February or early March, but noted that the meeting's objectives were not yet clear. Remler said he had stressed the importance of having clear goals) in part because the United States would demand them) but suggested to CDA Fuller that meetings in and of themselves might serve a purpose, if they helped the sides build trust and solve problems.

CPC Seeking to Advance Central Asia Border Assessment Project

¶6. (SBU) Conflict Prevention Center (CPC) staff told Poloffs January 13 that they planned to re-open discussions with Turkmen officials on a previously proposed assessment of the Turkmen border, in hopes of building on the positive momentum generated by the successful completion of two pilot programs involving Turkmen customs officials and border guards. CPC staff likely will travel to Ashgabat in mid- to late February to discuss the matter. Staff added that border assessments completed in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan between 2006 and 2008 had provided a solid foundation for OSCE activities. In Tajikistan, staff will continue to support the Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe; consider ways of continuing or building on a border patrolling project due to end in June; push the Tajik government to formally adopt an OSCE-supported national border strategy; and continue an existing customs training program.

OSCE Engagement in Afghanistan Under Discussion

¶7. (SBU) In a subsequent conversation January 13, CPC staff

said the Secretary General's office had taken the lead in exploring ways to expand the OSCE's engagement in Afghanistan but had made no real progress, in part because Russia and other participating States continued to object to OSCE activities inside Afghanistan. Nevertheless, staff are "floating" ideas for work inside Afghanistan and have taken a cursory look at revising, updating, or re-framing projects 15 and 16 (proposed by the Secretariat in 2008 as part of a comprehensive package of activities). CPC staff do not expect to develop formal proposals in the near future but believe they could present modified projects relatively quickly if change occurred at the political level, in part because the basic goal (building the capacity of Afghan border personnel) remains the same. In the meantime, staff intend to try to include Afghans as often as possible in training activities outside Afghanistan (through the Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe, for example) and encourage coordination with Central Asian states on a range of issues, including borders, counter-narcotics, and customs.

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Staff note, however, that historical animosities and poor organization often hinder effective regional cooperation. USOSCE will continue to stress the USG's ongoing interest in OSCE activities inside Afghanistan and will encourage the Secretariat, institutions, and field missions to consider creative ways of expanding OSCE engagement with Afghanistan.

A Russian Opening on the OSCE Inside Afghanistan?

18. (C) During their weekly bilateral meeting January 13, Russian Ambassador Azimov reminded CDA Fuller of their December discussion about the possibility of joint U.S.-Russian training in Central Asia. The idea would be to provide concrete follow-up to the 2009 Ministerial decision on trans-national threats (terrorism, narcotics, cyber-security, etc.), which the United States and Russia co-sponsored. Azimov suggested that joint training, perhaps in conjunction with the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, could be an excellent first step. He added that it might help convince Moscow to change its mind on OSCE projects inside Afghanistan and consider a similar joint training project in Kabul, perhaps on counter-narcotics. Asked if he had raised the joint training idea with Moscow, he replied that he had done so only informally. USOSCE 11 provides additional information.

Germany Warming Up on OSCE Training Inside Afghanistan?

19. (C) The German ambassador told CDA Fuller January 15 that Berlin, which, along with Moscow, has been opposed to OSCE training inside Afghanistan, appeared to be changing its position. Although he did not pinpoint the London conference, he stated that there could be a positive announcement of this change within the next two weeks.

Secretariat Seeking Afghan Participation in Econ/Environment Forum

110. (U) At the January 12 Economic and Environmental Committee meeting, Kazakhstan formally presented the agenda for the first segment of the Economic and Environmental Forum (EEF), to be held February 1-2 in Vienna. The EEF focuses on the facilitation and security of land transport and the promotion of good governance at border crossings, and includes a session focusing on Central Asia and Afghanistan. In an aside, members of the Secretariat told PolOff they were inviting a representative of the Afghan Ministry of Trade to participate. The Secretariat also said they could fund the participation of up to three Afghans and asked for U.S. assistance in encouraging participation. USOSCE has encouraged the Afghan mission in Vienna to respond positively to the invitation and has worked with Embassy Kabul to identify an appropriate participant from the Afghan Ministry of Commerce.

Kazakhstan's Chairmanship and the Zhovtis Case

¶11. (SBU) On the margins of the Kazakhstani Chairmanship's inaugural events the week of January 11, Kazakhstani Ambassador-at-Large Madina Jarbussynova expressed frustration to CDA Fuller that the Zhovtis case would continue to hang over the Chairmanship. She confided that after the October Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, she had worked hard to convince Kazakhstani government officials that the courts

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needed to review procedural inadequacies in the trial and give the case another hearing, but had been overruled. Jarbussynova was not convinced anyone had truly explained the details of the case to President Nazarbayev or stressed the real import for the Kazakhstani Chairmanship of a lack of due process in following Kazakhstani laws. She noted the human rights committee (which she chairs) of the Kazakhstani OSCE Task Force would soon hold an interagency meeting in Astana and said she intended to raise the Zhovtis case again.

Head of Mission in Skopje Likely to Propose Restructuring and Reductions for 2011

¶12. (SBU) The head of the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, Jose Luis Herrero, told CDA Fuller January 13 that proposed changes for 2011 included restructuring, some reductions, and the potential closure of the Tetovo field office. Herrero said Macedonia was an "unfinished success story," citing recent instances of progress such as the 2009 elections and the positive EC report, but warned that not all risks had disappeared, especially with the indefinite waiting period for joining NATO and the EU. He said the GoM was looking for recognition of its progress and argued that his proposed changes would both give them that progress and introduce operational changes that would allow the mission to do as much or more with fewer resources. Depending on the circumstances closer to the date, the Tetovo field office would be closed in 2011, with its monitoring functions in the NW continued out of Skopje. Herrero argued that participating States must recognize that the situation is not like it was in 2001, and asserted that the dependency on the OSCE and other internationals to resolve all disputes has to be reduced eventually. CDA Fuller emphasized the importance of caution in proceeding with any of these changes and said the push from the GoM needs to be balanced with reality on the ground. In response to the CDA's question about ethnic Albanian buy-in for closing Tetovo, Herrero said the initial reaction from an ethnic Albanian DPM had been positive, but he needed to consult more with other ethnic Albanian political leaders.

OMIK Head of Mission on Plans for 2010

¶13. (SBU) In a January 13 meeting, Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMIK) Werner Almhofer told CDA Fuller he was working on implementing the budget for 2010, which in the immediate term meant the difficult process of letting go of some 120-130 local staff. When questioned about a rumored Kazakhstani extra-budgetary project related to the Belgrade proposal for reception centers, Almhofer said only that he had heard a similar rumor. He said there might also be expectations that 400,000 euro added back to the Human Rights and Communities department from unspent 2009 funds would be used to work on returnee issues, but that Belgrade's obsession with the mission doing more "outreach" to non-Albanian communities was unwarranted given the amount of work the mission is already doing with non-Albanian, including Serb, communities. Almhofer acknowledged that the mission potentially could do more on returnee issues by working with UNHCR, relevant ministries, and receiving municipalities on related projects, such as shelters, but recalled that the mission's own study had found the Belgrade proposal generally infeasible for an OMIK project. CDA Fuller reiterated U.S. concerns about the Belgrade proposal,

noting its potential for sidestepping Kosovar institutions, and reminded Almhofer that OMIK's study had found the project not just infeasible, but outside the mission's mandate.

Initial Feedback Positive on U.S. DHoM for OMIK, but Work Remains

¶14. (C) Consultations with a variety of stakeholders on the prospect of a U.S. seconded deputy head of mission (DHoM) for OMIK have elicited positive feedback, but we still have further steps before the Kazakhstani Chairmanship can appoint the U.S. candidate. CDA Fuller has raised the issue with the Chairmanship, OMIK HoM Almhofer, the SG, and the Serbian and Russian ambassadors, emphasizing that the point is to put forward a highly qualified candidate with management and leadership skills, since many delegations recognize the need for better management in the OSCE's largest field mission. Serbian Ambassador Beham agreed there are management issues in OMIK, saying it was in disarray, and said Belgrade's positive experience with U.S. seconded DHoMs in the OSCE Mission there would be a helpful factor. Her personal view was that it would not be a problem. She added that she was pleased with the prospect of a female candidate but said she would need to consult with Belgrade. Russian AMB Azimov said he did not think it would be a problem for Moscow. The incumbent is Finnish, and in consultations before the holidays, Finnish Ambassador Turunen also said he did not see it as a problem. However, USOSCE recently has learned that the incumbent may be granted a six-month extension in order to help him bridge to his next assignment, as he is competing for a number of ambassadorships. OMIK HoM Almhofer appeared ready to go with the flow, but did not take a definite position. The SG, who originally encouraged us to propose a U.S. candidate, is currently consulting further with the HoM and with the Finns regarding potential timing issues, including the possibility of creating a temporary position to allow an overlap. Continuing to shepherd all these stakeholders to support a U.S. candidate will be crucial to giving the Kazakhstani Chairmanship the necessary level of comfort to make the appointment.

FULLER